

June 12, 2007

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-LA) today joined his Blue Dog Coalition colleagues Rep. Heath Shuler (D-NC) and Rep. Charlie Wilson (D-OH) in introducing legislation aimed at strengthening accountability and increasing the transparency of the budget process.

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The Blue Dog "Strengthening the Budget Process Resolution" ensures that members of Congress have a sufficient amount of time to properly examine legislation to determine its actual cost implications. The resolution also provides that lawmakers have at least three days to review the final text of any bill before casting their votes and requires that a full Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate accompany any bill or conference report that comes to the House floor. Finally, the resolution requires that a roll call vote take place on any legislation authorizing or providing new budget authority of at least \$50 million, providing an unprecedented level of clarity and honesty in the legislative process.

"Reigning in wasteful government spending is the first step in balancing our nation's budget and slashing the deficit," said U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon. "With this legislation, the days of negotiators adding expensive 11th hour sweeteners to bills in order to gain votes will be numbered. And lawmakers will know exactly how much of the taxpayers' money a bill will cost before

they have to vote on it. Our government needs to set fiscal priorities based on needs - not wants - and this Blue Dog resolution will bring the accountability and transparency necessary to enforce those priorities."

The "Strengthening the Budget Process Resolution" is part of the "Blue Dog Fiscal Accountability Package," three pieces of legislation that would further restore fiscal discipline to the federal government after years of budgetary mismanagement and irresponsible deficit spending. The Blue Dog Coalition, a group of 43 fiscally conservative Democrats, collectively crafted the legislative package in an effort to begin the process of restoring fiscal accountability in the federal government. Rep. Melancon has been a member of the coalition since first being elected to Congress in 2004.

"After six years of reckless fiscal practices and irresponsible deficit spending, the Blue Dogs are firmly committed to restoring the fiscal integrity of our nation," said Rep. Mike Ross (D-AR), Blue Dog Co-Chair for Communications. "In order to do that, we must reinstitute statutory pay-as-you-go rules and commit to balancing our budget, just as most American families do. This Blue Dog endorsed legislation is a much needed next step to ensure that the Congress does just that."

The legislation builds on the progress already made by the institution of pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) rules in the House of Representatives, which require that all new spending be offset with cuts to existing spending to reign in the deficit and work toward balancing the budget. Rep. Melancon and the Blue Dog Coalition successfully fought to have PAYGO included in the House rules package that passed in the first 100 hours of the 110th Congress.

"These are the type of common sense rules we need that will help foster a transparent process," said Rep. Charlie Wilson (D-OH).

"For the last six years President Bush and the Republicans in Congress recklessly increased spending, while driving our nation deeper into debt than ever before," said Rep. Heath Shuler (D-NC). "I am committed, along with my Blue Dog colleagues, to restoring fiscal restraint to the

federal government."

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